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Problematizing public engagement within public pedagogy research and practice

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In this article we explore issues related to how scholars attempt to *enact public pedagogy* (that is, doing ‘public engagement’ work) and how they *research public pedagogy* (that is, framing and researching artistic and activist ‘public engagement’ as public pedagogy). We focus specifically on three interrelated issues we believe should be addressed by scholars as they continue to theorize, enact, and analyze public pedagogies in the broader public sphere: (a) power dynamics embedded in individualized versus more collective enactments of public intellectualism; (b) conflicting and complicated conceptualizations of the relationship between the public pedagogue and the public, and how that relationship should be enacted; and (c) ethical issues surrounding the framing of public engagement and activist work under the umbrella of ‘pedagogy’.

Keywords: public pedagogy, public intellectualism, public engagement, popular culture, social activism, curriculum studies

With the pedagogical turn in the last several decades happening in a broad range of fields, including literature studies, cultural studies, and art, *pedagogy* has begun to emerge as a conceptual lens through which to understand the nexus of culture, learning, and social change (Hickey-Moody, Savage, & Windle, 2010; Rich & Sandlin, in press). More recently, *public pedagogy* has become a driving force in the theorization and practice of many of these fields, and while this term is taken up in various ways, its usages are broadly situated within several key approaches. First, researchers and practitioners have explored how sites or practices of art (Darder, 2011), social movement activism (O’Malley & Nelson, 2013), media (Giroux, 2001) literature, or popular culture (Jagodziniski, 2014) operate *pedagogically*—that is, researchers and educators analyze how various sites of culture that circulate in the public sphere act as pedagogical spaces and/or as pedagogues, as they teach us into certain ways of thinking about who we are and how the world works. Second, and

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more recently, the term *public pedagogy* is being deployed within scholarship in various fields as a way to describe the ‘*public engagement*’ work that has become a fundamental aspect of the vision and enactment of many disciplines within academia, including education, art, history, anthropology, physical culture studies, etc. (Rich & Sandlin, in press). Despite good intentions, however, the ethics and problematics of both *enacting* public engagement as well as *researching* it are often left unexplored by scholars interested in understanding public pedagogy (O’Malley & Roseboro, 2010; Rich & Sandlin, in press; Savage, 2014).

In this article we explore issues related to how scholars attempt to *enact public pedagogy* (that is, doing ‘public engagement’ work) and how they *research public pedagogy* (that is, framing and researching artistic and activist ‘public engagement’ as public pedagogy). Here, drawing upon and expanding recent work by Rich and Sandlin (in press) and Burdick and Sandlin (2010), we focus specifically on three interrelated issues we believe should be addressed by scholars as they continue to theorize, enact, and analyze public pedagogies in the broader public sphere: (a) power dynamics embedded in individualized versus more collective enactments of public intellectualism; (b) conflicting and complicated conceptualizations of the relationship between the public pedagogue and the public and how that relationship should be enacted; and (c) ethical issues surrounding the framing of public engagement and activist work under the umbrella of ‘pedagogy’.

In what follows we problematize the enactment and researching of public pedagogy as ‘public’ ‘intervention’. ‘Sophisticated’ conceptualizations of pedagogy see within spaces of public pedagogy room for contestation and negotiation (Hickey-Moody et al., 2010, p. 229). That is, such views of pedagogy do ‘not assume a simple movement of norms from society to individual’, but, rather, recognize that such ‘norms can be examined as they are developed and contested’ (Hickey-Moody et al., 2010, p. 229). This recognition thus opens up opportunities for scholars to take an active role in intervening to disrupt those norms and develop new ones, as well as to study artistic and activist work that seeks to intervene and disrupt (Rich & Sandlin, in press). These interventions into the public sphere raise questions about the construction of the ‘public’ within conceptualizations and enactments of public pedagogy, because, as with the notion of ‘pedagogy’, how the ‘public’ is conceived of within public pedagogy scholarship is also a matter of contestation (Savage, 2010; 2014). With regard to defining the ‘public’, for example, Savage has raised concerns about the lack of clarity around the concept of ‘public’ within public pedagogy scholarship, urging scholars to consider ‘which public?’ and ‘whose public?’ they are referring to when using the term (Savage, 2014, p. 79). Savage (2010) argues that the term public, like pedagogy, has been used in totalizing ways, falsely separates public from private, and disregards the ‘multiple and disparate publics’ (p. 104) that have arisen in the wake of globalization. The ways in which ‘public’ is used also simultaneously fails to recognize how individuals have unequal access to possibilities and knowledges within various public spaces. In his more recent work, Savage (2014) continues his project of clarifying the concept of ‘public’, as he encourages public pedagogy scholars to pay more attention to the forms of public invoked in such scholarship, offering three possibilities: political publics, popular publics, and

concrete publics. Further contested is the conceptualization of ‘public interventions’. The call for public engagement thus raises questions about what it means to both ‘intervene’ into the public sphere and to study those ‘interventions’. What does ‘doing’ ‘pedagogy’ in, to, or for, the public mean? Who are these publics? What purposes do these pedagogical interventions serve? How is such work enacted? Who gets to enact such work? It is to such questions centered around public interventions—both attempting to enact them as academics-turned-public-intellectuals, and attempting to research them under the umbrella of public pedagogy—that we now turn.

Who can be a public pedagogue?: individualized and collective enactments of public intellectualism

Despite typically not explicating who or what publics they are referring to, there has been an argument in many fields that educators need to move out of their ‘ivory towers’ and into the public, to act as public intellectuals or public pedagogues. Typical constructions of the public intellectual tend to assume the location of agency within(in) the ‘institutionally or professionally identified pedagogue’ (Sandlin, O’Malley & Burdick, 2011, p. 356). In this conceptualization, academics educate the public ‘in modes of critical praxis understood to foster agency, engaged citizenship, and sociopolitical imaginations’ (Brass, 2014, p. 91). Some early scholars emphasized public intellectuals’ role as civic leaders, educating large masses of individuals toward a more nuanced, and often democratic, socio-political consciousness (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011). More recent imaginings are grounded in the neo-Marxist theoretical traditions of Antonio Gramsci and Edward Said and have been disseminated widely through the public pedagogy literature through the prolific work of Henry Giroux (Brass, 2014). In his work on the public intellectual, Giroux (2004a, 2004b, 2004c) has sought to redefine the role of the traditional academic as an oppositional cultural worker, using the instruments of inquiry and theorization to lay bare the inequities and forms of domination that have become ubiquitous in neoliberal culture. As a central influence and exemplar of this mode of public intellectualism, Giroux (2004a) draws heavily on the work and life of Edward Said, who produced a foundational scholarly body of work while simultaneously engaging larger audiences via televised media, meeting both situations with a consistent, sound and politically uncompromising position. Others have also forwarded the idea of the traditional academic as a figure who might transcend the epistemic divide between formal and informal sites of learning; however, they have often done so within other, less didactic modes of engagement, such as theater or public art projects (Borg & Mayo, 2006) as means of being more relational in their enactments. Whether these enactments are more or less didactic, however, the individualized or ‘solitary figure in a seat of epistemic power’ (Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2010, p. xxv) prompts important questions regarding ‘on whose terms?’ (Mayo, 2002, p. 201) this public intellectual work operates (Rich & Sandlin, in press).

Problematising this individualistic definition of public intellectualism, other approaches draw from feminist and more communal understandings (Dentith, O'Malley, & Brady, 2014). Some of this work focusing on public pedagogy and public intellectualism eschews the solitary construct of the pedagogue in favor of a collectivist and collaborative understanding of educational activity. In particular, Brady (2006) emphasized the crucial role of politically committed communities—particularly those operating without structural hierarchies—in producing public pedagogies that can challenge characteristically, and oppressively, hierarchical structures, such as neoliberalism. These concepts in Brady's work would be taken up, albeit not directly, by activists following radically anarchic, anti-hierarchical means of organizing, detailed most clearly in the Invisible Committee's (2009) tract *The Coming Insurrection*.

These more communal and grassroots perspectives recognize that 'publics' (in their multiple forms), far from simply receiving transmitted knowledge, can also act as potential pedagogues. Brady (2006) explains, for example, that education in such spaces 'is public in two ways. First, it opens a space for contesting conventional academic boundaries and, second, it raises questions about the capacity for citizens to engage as critical educators in their present, everyday lives' (p. 58). As we point out elsewhere (Rich & Sandlin, in press) this approach takes seriously the view that those who can practise public pedagogy are not just the 'public intellectuals' of academia. Scholars have suggested that activists, particularly those whose work serves an educative end, comprise one subset of individuals who *teach* outside of the confines of traditional educational structures. Focusing particularly on activists and activist organizations who resist dominating capitalist (Sandlin & Milam, 2008), educational (O'Malley & Nelson, 2013), carceral (Burdick, 2015), and media (Brady, 2006) enterprises, these scholars suggest that this form of public pedagogy work confronts 'processes of injustice' as it constructs possibilities 'for the expression of complex, contesting, and subaltern perspectives' (Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011, p. 58). Collectively, these studies illustrate a vision of public intellectualism that, while potentially centering on a particular figurehead, does not locate its educational investments within an individual's intellectual capital. Rather, education in this form of engagement contrasts with Giroux's (2004a) visions of an intellectual *leader* that speaks to and for a public, instead suggesting public provocations that attempt to draw out political and cultural questions from their witnesses—an intellectualism produced in the moment of interaction with the public (Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011).

How do we do pedagogy in a public way?: from public instruction to publicness

Another scholar who has addressed the lack of scholarship within public pedagogy attempting to understand and theorize conceptualizations of the 'public' is Gert Biesta (2012a, 2014), who explores in his work how to do pedagogy in a 'public way', or in the 'interest of the public quality of human togetherness' (2014, p. 16). Biesta (2012a) is concerned that the public sphere is declining and even at risk of being eclipsed

altogether by private spaces and interests. Biesta argues, following Marquand (2004), that the main function of the public domain is to “define the public interest and to produce public goods” (Biesta, 2012a, p. 685). Thus the values that drive and maintain the public sphere are of collective, and not self, interest (Marquand, 2004). For Biesta (2012a), they are, thus, ‘political values’ (p. 686). He asks, then, how does the ‘public sphere “take place”, both metaphorically and literally’? (Biesta, 2012a, p. 684). Drawing on Hannah Arendt’s work, he sees the public sphere as a place ‘where freedom can appear’ (quoted in Biesta, 2012a, p. 684). This ‘place’ is not necessarily conceived as a physical space but pertains to a ‘particular quality of human togetherness’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 684). The process of constructing such a public sphere, then, becomes one of continually ‘becoming public’, which is in turn connected to ‘the condition of plurality’ linked to a ‘citizenship of strangers’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 684). Biesta is interested in how modes of collective action—where ‘citizenships of strangers’ constitute a ‘mode of human togetherness which is not after a common *ground* but rather articulates an interest in a common *world*’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 690)—can be fostered and sustained.

For Biesta, the question of public pedagogy involves how to conceive and enact public pedagogy as an ‘active and deliberate intervention in the “public” domain’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 691) towards creating public spheres driven by plurality. This question, for Biesta, is less about *who* can be a public pedagogue, and more about *how* that pedagogy is enacted (Rich & Sandlin, in press), which depends on the conceptualization of the relationship between the public pedagogue(s) and the ‘public’. Moreover, he considers not how public pedagogy operates to teach the public, but addresses the *responsibilities* pedagogy has towards the public. He conceptualizes three ways this relationship can be viewed, and public pedagogy can be enacted. A pedagogy *for* the public is ‘a pedagogy *aimed at* the public’ (Biesta, 2014, p. 21), which uses instruction by ‘educational agents’ (Biesta, 2014, p. 22) as its main form and which places what should ideally be a logic of democratic politics under a *logic of schooling*. Here, the ‘world is seen as a giant school and the main role of educational agents is to *instruct* the citizenry. This involves telling them what to think, how to act and, perhaps most importantly, what to be’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 691). As such, this conceptualization of public pedagogy facilitates the ‘erasure of plurality and difference’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 691).

A pedagogy *of* the public is a pedagogy ‘done *by* the public itself’ through the mode of ‘collective *learning*’ (Biesta, 2014, p. 22). As Biesta (2012a) explains,

The pedagogical ‘mode’ in this interpretation is that of learning or, in more political terms ... a process aimed at the generation of critical awareness and ‘critical consciousness’ (Freire 1970). Here, we might think of the world as a giant adult education class in which educational agents perform the role of facilitator. (p. 692)

However, this mode, which has more potential to foster plurality than the first perspective, still places democracy under a ‘regime of learning’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 693). What this does, educationally, is to *demand* something of the public—both that they adopt and enact a particular relationship of ‘self to the self’, and that they *learn*. This latter demand entails turning what are actually *social* problems into *learning*

problems; thus these public pedagogies turn the responsibility for those problems onto the individual rather than the collective (Biesta, 2012a, p. 693). The problem with both pedagogy *to* and *for* the public, then, is that they ‘run the risk of *replacing* politics by education, either by conceiving of public pedagogy as a form of instruction, or by understanding public pedagogy in terms of learning’—thus ‘teaching individuals what they should be’ or ‘demanding from them that they learn’ (Biesta, 2012a, pp. 684–685). That is, ‘the first interpretation takes politics out by teaching citizens how to act and be, whereas the second takes politics out by bringing it under a regime of learning’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 693).

The third perspective, however, ‘hints at both a different educational dynamic and a different political dynamic’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 693). This perspective, which Biesta (2012a, 2014) calls a *pedagogy in the interest of publicness*, works at the ‘*intersection* of education and politics’ (Biesta, 2014, p. 23), where it is not drawn into or under an ‘educational’ logic. Public pedagogy here becomes an ‘enactment of a concern for “publicness”—that is, a concern for the public quality of human togetherness and thus for the possibility of actors and events to become public’ (p. 23), or to create a form of ‘political existence ... in which action is possible and freedom can appear’ (p. 23). For Biesta, public artistic interventions might hold the potential to reinvigorate and reopen the public sphere, when such interventions constitute ‘forms of interruption that keep the opportunities for “becoming public” open’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 685). Biesta therefore provides a compelling rationale for the need to move beyond pedagogy as a cognitive and rational process of transmission, towards a more complex, affective process of relationality and embodiment (see Burdick, Sandlin, & O’Malley, 2014), which extends beyond a focus on a *teacher* and instead locates the educational moment at the dialogic intersection between multiple subjectivities. This view decouples public pedagogy from its roots in authoritarian views of pedagogy, and perhaps most importantly, allows for the negotiation, rather than the simple transfer, of final meaning (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013). This line of argument recognises the different and sometimes conflicting trajectories enduring within public pedagogy theory; on the one hand, a critical theory based public pedagogy tends to assume a rational dialogue; elsewhere, a more arts-based public pedagogy is an approach engaging with more embodied, holistic, performative, intersubjective, and aesthetic modes of pedagogy (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013).

Whilst the agenda for each might be different, Biesta (2014) sees much more promise in the latter enactments of public pedagogy, as he argues that ‘activist’, ‘experimental’, and ‘demonstrative’ (p. 23) *artistic* interruptions can possibly reignite the public sphere through civic action. The move beyond critical dialogue is in part a recognition of the broader debates about the limitations of language and a desire to capture that which cannot be articulated through language; towards more relational, embodied and affective practices (Wetherell, 2015). Thus pedagogies fostering publicness, or ‘spaces where freedom can appear’, are about ‘new ways of being and doing’ (Biesta, 2014, p. 23) that have not already been done, thought, or conceived. In fostering such pedagogies, we cannot rely on merely ‘transmitting’ knowledge for purposes that are already decided (Rich & Sandlin, in press). The public pedagogue’s important role here is not to instruct, nor facilitate, but to ‘interrupt’ (Biesta, 2012a, p.

693). One example Biesta (2012a, 2014) provides of this kind of interruption is the Permanent Breakfast (permanentbreakfast.org), which was started by a group of artists in 1996 in Vienna, Austria and which is a permanent ongoing breakfast in public space. As Biesta (2012a) explains, the goal of the permanent breakfast is for participants to have breakfast in as many public places/spaces as they can, and to do so –

without advance notice or requests for permission, on the assumption that public places are precisely those places where things can be done without the need for anyone to give permission. (pp. 683–684)

Another example of an artistic interruption that serves as a kind of ‘litmus test’ regarding the publicness of a site is a piece by Finnish artist Pilvi Takala, whose work has been described as consisting of ‘interventions in everyday life’ (Bonniers Konsthall, n.d., para. 1). In one project, Takala dressed up like Snow White (*Real Snow White*, Takala, 2009) and tried to enter Disneyland Paris. She arrived before the parks opened and stood in line in front of the entrance gates, amid families who spotted her as they waited to enter. Many young girls who were also dressed as Disney princesses excitedly asked for her autograph or to take pictures with her. After several minutes she was stopped by Disney security guards, who informed her that she was not allowed to enter the park in a ‘disguise’, because people might think she was the ‘real Snow White’. They also stated she could not enter the park, ‘because we [Disneyland Paris security] don’t know what you’re going to do. Maybe you’re going to do bad things. We don’t know.’ The guards escorted her away from the front gates and into a nearby restroom so that she could change; on the walk to the restroom she was asked several more times by park visitors to stop and take pictures with them.

In this work, Takala ‘excavates and illuminates the invisible structures that frame our lives’ (Ontiveros, n.d., para. 1), which can occur in both private and public spaces, especially as the demarcations between private and public are increasingly blurred. By acting in ‘unnatural’ ways that go against social norms, her work reveals those norms in order to help us think about how our behavior is so structured by them, and to perhaps consider new ways of being and behaving in the spaces we inhabit and with the people who surround us, no matter where we are. *Real Snow White* (Takala, 2009) exposes, for example, the strict control that The Walt Disney Company exerts. Takala (2009) says of *Real Snow White* that ‘the absurd logic of the ‘real character’ and the extreme discipline of Disneyland become apparent when a real fan of Disney’s Snow White is banned from entering the park in a Snow White costume’ (para. 1). Takala’s intervention demonstrates Disney’s control over visitors and their theme park experiences in multiple ways. On the surface, of course, it reveals clear control over how visitors can look and act, in this case, how visitors can dress. This control is not simply about enforcing a dress code, or about achieving some sense of ‘decorum’ among visitors at the parks, however; rather, it is directly tied to concerns about maintaining strict control over the representation of the Disney brand and the standardization of visitor experience.

Takala (2009) explains that ‘the Disney slogan “Dreams Come True” of course means dreams produced exclusively by Disney’ (para. 1). This piece also shows, then,

how important it is to the park that they have control over *which* Snow White park guests are exposed to, in order to ensure the ‘purity’ of the Disney brand. Although Takala’s costume looks like a perfect rendition of the ‘real’ Snow Whites that work for Disney parks, Takala had to be banned because she pushed up against the company’s lines of control; Disney could not control what she did or said at the park. One security guard told her that Snow White does not drink or smoke, implying they were afraid Takala would engage in behavior that was not allowed for the ‘real’ Snow White. Takala’s work interrupts Disney’s tight control over theme park space and visitor behavior, and reveals what happens when those are questioned even in the slightest way.

It is perhaps not surprising that Disney quickly shut down Takala’s work, given that she was, in essence, performing public acts in a private space. To consider Disney as simply *private*, however, elides the profound effects and relationships Disney has with and over multiple publics, as it helps create and shape consumers, shapes global labor practices, and promulgates ideological dispositions (Budd, 2005). Writing to this intersection, Savage (2010) has discussed the difficulty in easily teasing out the differences between corporate and public space, particularly within a cultural milieu that has experienced multiplicative growth of the corporate sphere. Thus, although this piece differs from the Permanent Breakfast in that it is staged in front of the gates of a corporate owned theme park, we believe it serves similar functions in that it reveals the norms structuring how we can be with others in places, producing public acts even within corporate confines. Neither project is a form of pedagogy *for* the public, that is, they are not public instruction, telling people, for example ‘what they should do or be’, nor is either concerned with providing an example of a mode of ‘civic action that would deserve repetition’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 694). Neither is a pedagogy *of* the public, either, as they are not ‘study circles, discussion groups, or political awareness meetings’ (p. 694). Instead, they point to a pedagogy in the *interest of publicness*, as they both constitute events that are ‘explicitly “out of place”’, which is exactly what makes them interesting, both ‘politically and educationally’ (p. 694). Politically, both projects reveal what is possible in those spaces—whether public or private—and how spaces are ‘determined, controlled and policed, or are open to a plurality of being and doing’ (p. 694). Such interruptions also help reveal the ‘public quality of particular forms of togetherness and ... the extent to which actual spaces and places make such forms of human togetherness possible’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 693). Educationally, these projects reveal how as Biesta explains, following Ranciere, public pedagogues as *interrupters* insert into a public space a kind of ‘dissensus’—that is, both Takala and the Permanent Breakfasts insert an ‘incommensurable element—an event, an experience and an object—that can act both as a test and as a reminder of publicness’ (p. 693). These interruptions are not *led*, nor, therefore, *controlled*, by public *instructors* or *facilitators* who seek a particular learning outcome, but rather they emerge as interruptive enactments of human togetherness including both pedagogue and public (Rich & Sandlin, in press).

Why are we using ‘pedagogy’ to frame public engagement and activism?: the problem with pedagogy

However, even the kinds of aesthetic, artistic, and embodied enactments of public pedagogy that Biesta and others forward as holding promise for critical learning do not necessarily lead to education in the service of publicness, because, as Biesta (2012a, 2014) argues, they might still fall under the logics of education, which he argues are problematic because they are either ‘based on superior knowledge of an educator—so that the educator would be in a position to tell others how to act and how to be’ or they put ‘the educator in the role of a facilitator of learning—thus putting the whole process under a learning “regime”’ (Biesta, 2012a, p. 694). Learning ‘is not some kind of open and natural process that can go in any direction’ (Biesta, 2012a, pp. 692–693), but, rather, is a regime under which learners must adopt a relation to self that demands an ‘awareness, reflection, and conclusion’ (p. 693) and that turns social and collective problems into individual ones (Biesta, 2012a), distancing these problems from the realm of political consideration and shifting the focus to individual concerns. In this final section of our paper, we build on Biesta’s uneasiness about the ways in which pedagogical regimes can shut down possibilities for fostering spaces of openness and publicness, by addressing the problematic practice of public pedagogy researchers identifying, labeling, and examining public engagement work under the label of ‘public pedagogy’.

Extending Biesta’s critique of ‘learning regimes’, then, we posit as another problematic issue that most conceptualizations and enactments of public pedagogy aim to effect a certain intended outcome for or disposition within the individual (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013), a position that relies on and echoes master narratives of modernity, including the conceptualizations of humans as free and autonomous, the self as having the potential for growth, development, and self-actualization, and the individual as a rational creature who uses reason to make sense of experience, and who has the freedom and power to act (Sandlin, Wright, & Clark, 2013). Further, they draw upon pedagogy’s distinctly humanist origins—a project intended to *perfect* humanity via culturally specific, Western notions of an ideal state (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013). Tervo (2015a) argues that this humanist legacy is also enacted in the pedagogical relationships currently conceptualized within the push for lifelong, post-Fordist learning. Under this pedagogical umbrella, learning is always future-oriented, as learners are urged to *become* something, and to embrace an ideal of being or doing *something better* in the future. On this basis, learning is equated with improving the ‘self’; part of neoliberal imperative to learn in order to become ‘market-knowledgeable’ (Phillips & Ilcan, 2004) within a knowledge economy (Peters, 2010). Within neoliberalism capitalism, with its orientations towards the market and knowledge economy, learning has thus become indistinguishable from labor, constituted as a resource to enhance productivity and growth. As such, the lines between living and work can become blurred as workers are expected to be constantly learning, and as lifelong learning is increasingly geared towards constantly reinventing one’s self as a productive worker, and towards becoming part of the ‘flexible’ workforce, adapting and adjusting ‘to the ever-changing demands of the

global economy' (Biesta, 2012b, p. 8) in accordance with the demands of neoliberalism. Here, the common narrative of learning, grounded in the ideologies of humanism, is that it is a rationalist 'goal-oriented process of change', and must be always looking forward to 'a future that we *might see* ahead of us' (Tervo, 2015a, p. 1). When using the language of pedagogy to describe out-of-school phenomena, scholars must always remember this language's embeddedness within the humanist drive (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013), ideally inflecting and disrupting this history via the many theoretical approaches that have worked against narrowing and normative forms of education (for example, feminist, postcolonial, queer, anti-racist, anti-abilist).

Returning to Pilvi Takala's work, we find in her installation *The Trainee* (Takala, 2008) an example of an interruption that might point to ways we can begin to unsettle these humanistic and post-Fordist conceptualizations of learning, specifically their future- and goal-orientedness. *The Trainee* was a collaboration between Takala, the global accounting firm Deloitte, and the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, Finland. During this month-long intervention in the marketing department at Deloitte, Takala worked as an intern or trainee. She spent long hours sitting at her desk without doing any tasks that would normally be recognizable as either 'work' or 'learning'. On some days she rode the elevator all day, and on others sat in the library all day, appearing to just sit without 'working' or actively 'learning'. When asked what she was doing, she replied, 'brain work' or 'thinking'. Almost no one else in the office was 'in' on the intervention, and many reacted with curiosity, confusion, or anger. Co-workers sent emails to their bosses, demanding to know 'who she [Takala] was' and 'what she was doing', while describing what she was doing as 'weird', 'funny', and 'scary'.

In *The Trainee*, the act of seemingly 'doing nothing' disrupts the workspace where people are supposed to 'be working', or, as she is a trainee, 'learning' towards the goal of working. This project reveals contradictions between what counts as 'work' or 'learning' and what are seen as 'acceptable' ways that workers already waste time—'masking laziness in apparent activity and browsing Facebook', for example (Takala, 2008, para. 4). However, when a worker/learner sits at an empty desk, 'thinking', the 'peace of the community' is interrupted and co-workers feel threatened and uneasy. In this piece, co-workers at the office struggled to make sense of someone who defined work/learning as 'thinking', and who seemed to be utterly goal-less and present-, not future-, directed. This interruption thus challenges normative, humanist ideas about what it means to learn (and work). Instead of learning—that is, doing something to 'change' herself into something 'better' in the future—she does nothing. As Takala explains, 'the non-doing person isn't committed to any activity, so they have the potential for anything' (2008, para. 5). This non-doing seems out of place in a capitalist workforce where workers are expected to *do* something, or at least to pretend to. Takala's presence thus becomes a refusal of neoliberal capitalist work, and a form of resistance 'against lifelong, post-Fordist learning' (Tervo, 2015a, p. 1). She refuses to take on the identity of a learner, exposing that 'calling someone a learner is actually a very specific intervention' (Biesta, 2012b, p. 9), and this refusal to participate is unsettling. If she were doing

something, some kind of ‘anti-order activity’, people might know how to react, to quell it or to stop it (Takala, 2008, para. 1). However, Takala explains that in not doing, there is potential for anything—not just the predetermined outcomes at play in pedagogical regimes. She states that ‘the potential for anything is a continual stimulus without a solution’ and is thus profoundly disturbing (para. 5). It is the non-doing that is a ‘threat to order’, as it is ‘non-doing that lacks a place in the general order of things’ (para. 5).

Her non-doing is not a *counter* of the capitalist order, however—that would require some kind of action, the kind of action a traditional political subject might take up. Instead, her work is corrosive, and plays with the dimension of *time* rather than *space* (Tervo, 2015a). That is, her ‘ambiguous passivity’—she neither embraces nor denies her position as ‘trainee’—is an act of resistance that ‘corrodes a future that we *might see* ahead of us, which, of course, can be seen to go against the common narrative of learning as a goal-oriented process of change’ (Tervo, 2015a, p. 1). Takala’s work thus resists the kinds of logics that are at work within the kinds of pedagogical regimes discussed by Biesta (2012a, 2012b) as Takala rejects the ‘smooth continuum between what is and what will be’ (Tervo, 2015a, p. 2). That is, Takala’s work does not anticipate or look forward towards a future but rather is situated in the now, the present moment, as ‘she performs a horrifying continuity of the present without a clear end’ (Tervo, 2015a, p. 2)—a present moment that is eclipsed or colonized by the pedagogical regimes of neocapitalism (Tervo, 2015a). Her work thus enacts non-participation in a way that ‘troubles the demand of participation embedded in the neoliberal imaginary’ (Tervo, 2015b, p. 4). In a corrosion of the future-oriented visions of humanist and neoliberal pedagogical regimes, Takala resists the ‘obsessive gaze that speculative capital lays upon the unknown’, as a time/space of ‘infinite *promise*’, and instead situates the ‘unknown as unknown: as an impasse of thought that puts not only the future, but present as well in question’ (Tervo, 2015a, p. 3).

Finally, another problem inherent in studying public pedagogy is that our framework for understanding what pedagogy is ‘extends from our own cultural constructs of what is defined as *teaching* and *learning* in institutional settings—constructs that reify traditional forms of intellectual activity as the only possible mode of critical intervention’ (Burdick & Sandlin, 2010, p. 351). What we *know* as education is informed by existing, school-related cultural artifacts, practices, and beliefs, all of which are ultimately arbitrary yet operate to limit our capacity to see or even imagine new possibilities that lie beyond those institutional scripts. This myopia becomes especially crucial when studying critical, resistant public pedagogies, as resistance to institutional forms often necessitates taking up tactics and strategies that are not included in nor even comprehensible to institutional discourses and practices. Along with our critiques of pedagogy’s humanist origins explicated above, understanding critical public pedagogies requires us to question the very foundations of our inquiry practices, theorization, and modes of representation, all of which are bound to the humanist institution of the academy, and all of which threaten the critical potential of those projects to create new ways of thinking and being. We must consider that perhaps critical public pedagogies produce and enact a ‘*pedagogical*

Other—forms and practices of pedagogy that exist independently of, even in opposition to, the knowledge within the commonsense’ (Burdick & Sandlin, 2010, p. 351). We thus cannot research or seek to understand those critical public interventions using the lenses, tools, and languages of institutionally-based frameworks and methodologies without risking losing the critical promise of the pedagogical Other in so doing.

An invitation

In lieu of a conclusion, we end with an opening, an invitation for scholars to rethink how they enact and research public pedagogies, to exist within and operate from liminal spaces in between leaving the unknown as unknown (Tervo, 2015a), and seeking to understand, know, comprehend, and facilitate public ‘learning’ and activist practice and knowledge. Regarding enacting pedagogies or ‘public interventions’ in the interest of publicness (Biesta, 2012a, 2014), this might entail not speaking to, for, or on behalf of a real or imagined public, not attempting to facilitating a particular outcome of learning, but rather enacting the role of interrupter, seeking to produce pedagogies in the interest of publicness with the aim of enacting political and cultural questions through the very acts of public interaction and human togetherness themselves. In terms of researching activist interventions into the public sphere, scholars might learn to sit uncomfortably in the space that lies between apprehending and eclipsing those pedagogical interventions and pedagogues, especially if we want these sites to retain their qualities ‘of human existence’ that make ‘new histories and emergent identities possible’ (Alexander, 2008, p. 106). If we cannot or will not remain in these liminal spaces, scholarly work on public pedagogy will likely become enervated of its possibility, its alterity to commonsensical forms of education, and its very viability as a political site of resistance (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011). Collectively, we offer the critiques articulated in this article as a dissonant framework through which to enact and study public pedagogies, and to bring these discourses to bear on both culture itself and the roles we play as academics within that culture.

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